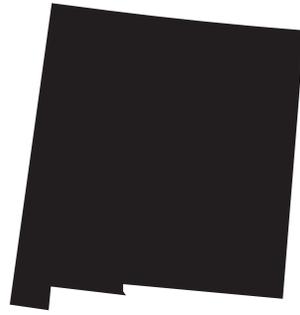


in agreement that the festival's management (8.5), artist treatment (8.8) and artist amenities (9.0) were above par, and half of them called these categories perfect. The photographer went one step further, praising the event as "well run."

For that matter, individual and average scores for all remaining categories were above average to perfect, beginning with quality of work (8.5), balance of mediums (8.3) and prestige of show (9.0). With that being said, and in the interest of fairness, we will relate the clay artisan's concern that the show "...has lost its edge over the years." (At the same time, bear in mind that the sentiment was not echoed by his/her peers.) Final average scores were as follows: layout (9.3), load-in/-out (9.5), parking (also 9.5) and judging & awards (9.3), with that last grade being particularly noteworthy given the \$21,000 in available prize money.

With a focus on fine art, the 21st annual St. Louis Art Festival is

expected to take place in September.



NEW MEXICO

(Editor's note: State Reporter David Schneider's review of this show appeared in our January 2014 issue. The following review is compiled from FastAudit responses.)

► **October 4-6 & 11-13, Rio Grande Arts & Crafts Festival – Balloon Fiesta Show, Albuquerque.**

Contact: Ruth Gore, 3709 Westfield Drive NE, Suite A, Albuquerque, NM 87111. Phone: 505-292-7457. Fax: 505-293-1153. Email: info@riograndefestivals.com. Website: www.riograndefestivals.com. Application fee: \$30. Space fee:

\$400. Space size: 10x10 to 10x20. 80% indoors/20% outdoors. Exhibitors: 225. Attendance: 80,000 (source: gate receipts). Admission: \$7.

Compiled from *FastAudit* reports

Held over two weekends, and coinciding with the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta, which draws approximately 2 million visitors to the area, this festival and its big, white tent have become Albuquerque-area traditions – and landed at #6 on the fine art portion of 2013's *200 Best*. In addition to David Schneider's glowing review in our January issue (page 52), we received feedback from a good number of exhibitors who were at this event's silver anniversary edition, and their comments and scores were overwhelmingly positive.

Before getting into the results, though, please keep in mind that very few of these reviewers indicated whether they were present for both or just one weekend, and as a result it's difficult to gauge the worth of some of their reported totals. Still, auditors enjoyed combined average revenue of \$4,038.15 from an average item price (AIP) of \$246.84. Additionally, more than two-thirds of reviewers had AIPs that were over \$50 (to a high of \$1,000), and the category earned an overall average score of 7.1 (on a 10-point scale).

Furthermore, due to the large volume of responses and space limitations, we're unable to specify all reviewers' totals and AIPs. With that being said, only two auditors took in less than \$2,000, including a photographer (\$1,727 total/\$140 AIP) and a second photographer (\$495 total/\$250 AIP). Out of the rest, about half landed between



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\$2,000 (from a mixed media artist; \$55 AIP) and \$4,500 (from a leather artisan; \$180 AIP), and the remainder reported sales between \$5,000 (from an oil painter; \$400 AIP) and \$8,000+ (from a wooden puzzle maker; \$55 AIP).

Strong attendance (9.4), good weather (9.4) and robust advertising (9.6) definitely helped bring patrons through the gate, but we received conflicting accounts of the crowd's spending habits. For example, a 3-D mixed media artist (\$7,500 total/\$800 AIP) told us it was an "international crowd with money to spend." On the other side of the aisle, a bronze sculptor (\$4,300 total/\$600 AIP) said the "quality of customers [was] low." The low-selling photographer blamed the still-sluggish economy, but a clothing maker (\$3,000 total/\$30 AIP) philosophically said, "Although my sales were lower than usual, I feel that I could build up a clientele here if I keep coming back."

Any sales disappointments weren't reflected in scores for management (9.8), which earned the highest average score of any category. Artist treatment (9.7) and artist amenities (9.0) were also highly regarded, and a metal artisan (\$3,000 total/\$200-\$300 AIP) added that he/she is "always treated well by [the] promoters."

Other aspects and their grades included: quality of work (8.6), balance of mediums (8.9), prestige of show (9.2), layout (9.4), load-in/-out (8.7) and parking (9.2). As the aforementioned leather artisan put it, "It is a privilege to be showcased with such talented artists."

Called "one of the best shows in the Southwest" by the photographer with \$1,727 total, the Rio Grande Arts & Crafts Festival – Balloon Fi-

esta Show is also one of the nation's most unique. Look for the next edition to take place in October.

► **November 29-30, Rio Grande Arts & Crafts Festival – Holiday Show, Albuquerque.** Contact: Ruth Gore, 3709 Westerfield

Drive NE, Suite A, Albuquerque, NM 87111. Phone: 505-292-7457. Fax: 505-293-1153. Email: info@riograndefestivals.com. Website: www.riograndefestivals.com. Application fee: \$30. Space fee: \$450-\$900. Space size: 10x10 to 10x20. 100% indoors. Exhibitors: 185. Attendance: 20,000 (source: gate re-



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By David Schneider

Arizona and New Mexico Reporter

Email: david@fringe.com

Medium: Photography

The 2013 Rio Grande Arts & Crafts Festival – Holiday Show was one of those events that you hear about from other artists as you sit around the campfire reminiscing about the “good old days.” Well, maybe we don’t sit around the campfire that much, but we do hear about the good shows, and this was one of them.

Held the weekend after Thanksgiving, the festival is usually very strong overall. This year, given the vast uncertainty in the economy and the continued bad news coming from the government, it was anybody’s guess what would happen.

Friday morning started out as most Friday mornings do, with a sizable line of about 100 people or so forming outside the front doors. With a simple announcement at 10, the doors opened and the patrons

streamed in, fanning out throughout the show. So far, so good.

From somewhere inside, a slight buzz grew and grew. Before you could realize it, the buzz was a hum and the show was packed – packed – with patrons. Best of all, people were buying. Most artists didn’t have time to catch their breath until they looked up and realized that the festival had closed! Patrons left, arms loaded, only to come back so they could peruse the next aisle of the show, and still more patrons arrived. It was truly a wonderful day.

Saturday seemed almost as strong. Most exhibitors with whom I spoke had another very good day and although not quite a repeat of that Friday, it was still wonderful. Sunday was a bit slower, as expected, but some of my contacts continued to do well.

To be fair, not every exhibitor had a blockbuster show, and some really good artists did somewhat poorer than they expected. But on the whole, the festival was very strong across all categories. From my

poll of the artists, most had an excellent show and everyone was smiling. I couldn’t find a category that didn’t do well, and “what a show” was a common phrase on Sunday night.

Held at Expo New Mexico, this is also an easy event to set up and tear down, even with it starting a day after Thanksgiving. Thankfully, you’re allowed to set up either Wednesday or Thursday, giving you the choice of what works best for you. With that much setup time, the booths all look fantastic – a fact mirrored by the patrons. As they walk through the show, they frequently comment on how good it is, making everyone’s day.

It is good, to be sure, in part because Rio Grande carefully selects and balances the exhibitors. This results in plenty of selection at a variety of price points in the categories, something the patrons recognize and appreciate. There was a bevy of new artists, too, which helps keep the show fresh and vibrant. Because the event is well established, there are very few problems, and those that inevitably crop up are quickly dealt with. If you do need help, an organizer or volunteer is available, and you are taken care of.

The organizers also know how to advertise. Scattered throughout town were well-placed billboards, and ads run in the local newspaper and on television. On one day of the show, the local morning news even mentioned that the festival was happening and encouraged viewers to attend. In any event, promotion is very effective. Rio Grande also offers a yearly pass, which allows unlimited access to every day of all three shows (including this one, the spring edition and the Balloon Fiesta). This feature helps tremendously, as it provides an almost-guaranteed



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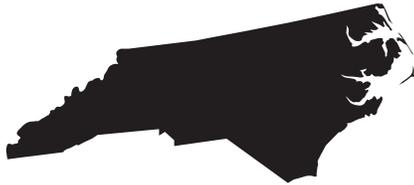
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All in all, this was a strong outing all around. Friday's buzz was felt by almost everyone, and it turned into one of those wonderful days. It was a show we will be talking about for a long time to come, that's for sure.



NORTH CAROLINA

(Editor's note: State Reporter Carol Joy Shannon's review of this show appeared in our December 2013 issue. The following review is compiled from FastAudit responses.)

► **September 21-22, Center-Fest Arts Festival, Durham.** Contact: Sherry DeVries, Durham Arts Council, 120 Morris Street, Durham, NC 27701. Phone: 919-560-2722. Fax: 919-560-2725. Email: sldevries@durhamarts.org. Website: www.centerfest.durhamarts.org. Application fee: \$20. Space fee: \$185-\$370. Space size: 10x10 to 10x20. 100% outdoors. Exhibitors: 135. Attendance: 25,000 (source: gate counts). Admission: \$5.

Compiled from *FastAudit* reports

For nearly 40 years, the Center-Fest Arts Festival has been bringing fine arts and crafts to the streets of Durham – and turning a nice profit for countless exhibitors along the way. We received *FastAudit* responses from a small number of artists and craftspeople who were at the latest edition, and though Mother Nature definitely rained on their parade, they all said they'd be interested in

returning this year.

As detailed by State Reporter Carol Joy Shannon in her December 2013 review (page 44), rain – and the threat of it – conspired to keep attendance down on Saturday. That factor was certainly reflected in these reviewers' scores for attendance and weather, which earned 6.8 and 5.5 overall average marks (on a 10-point

scale), respectively. Advertising fared much better, drawing a 7.5 average grade.

And truth be told, more than half of the reported revenue totals were admirable, especially given the circumstances, and sales' average score was a 6.0. However, only three reviewers shared their numbers, including a photographer with \$5,000

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